

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 0371

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, GY
SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER COMMENTS ON NEW CONSTITUTION

REF: GEORGETOWN 0363

1. FONMIN WILLS PROVIDED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION DURING OUR FEBRUARY 16 MEETING CONCERNING THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS FOR HANDLING CHEDDI JAGAN AND HIS PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PPP). THIS PART OF OUR CONVERSATION WAS GENERATED BY MY QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE GOG'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE SOVIETS AND THE CUBANS.

2. WILLS SAID AGAIN THAT BURNHAM'S STRATEGY WILL BE TO IMPLEMENT A NEW CONSTITUTION BEFORE THE 1978 ELECTIONS. THE CONSTITUTION WOULD PROVIDE FOR AN EXECUTIVE PRESIDENT AND FOUR VICE PRESIDENTS. IT WOULD ALSO PROVIDE FOR A DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM WHICH, ACCORDING TO WILLS, WOULD BE DERIVED FROM THE WESTMINISTER MODEL. THE OPPOSITION, HOWEVER, WOULD BE IN THE FORM OF INDIVIDUALS RATHER THAN PARTIES. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUERY, WILLS CONFIRMED THAT WHAT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT WAS A ONE-PARTY SYSTEM IN WHICH JAGAN WOULD BE
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SWALLOWED UP. HE COULD BE ONE OF THE FOUR VICE PRESIDENTS. IN THIS WAY BURNHAM WOULD UNITE THE TWO DOMINANT RACES WITHIN THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT RATHER THAN KEEPING THE GREAT GAP WHICH DIVIDES THEM.

3. I QUESTIONED WHETHER JAGAN WOULD ALLOW HIMSELF

AND HIS PPP TO BE CO-OPTED IN THIS FASHION. WILLS
SAID THAT PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC) LEADERS
WERE GAMBLING THAT THE CUBANS AND SOVIETS WOULD
CONVINCE JAGAN TO JOIN IN A NATIONAL FRONT GOVERNMENT.
I THEN EXPRESSED DOUBTS THAT JAGAN COULD TAKE HIS
EAST INDIAN CONSTITUENCY ALONG WITH HIM. WILLS
THOUGHT HE COULD TAKE ENOUGH SUPPORT WITH HIM TO MAKE
IT WORTHWHILE FOR THE PNC. AFTER ALL, THE REAL
PURPOSE OF THE WHOLE EXERCISE WAS TO NEUTRALIZE THE
THREAT FROM JAGAN.

4. COMMENT: WILLS' COMMENT THAT THE NEW CONSTITUTION
WHILE ESSENTIALLY PROVIDING FOR A ONE-PARTY STATE
WOULD RETAIN DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM APPEARS
TO ME TO CONTAIN UNRESOLVABLE CONTRADICTIONS. I
SUSPECT THAT HE IS TRYING AGAIN TO MAKE WHAT IS
AHEAD APPEAR MORE PALATABLE FOR US. ANOTHER PROBLEM
THE GOG FACES IN IMPLEMENTING A NEW CONSTITUTION IS
THAT A REFERENDUM IS NECESSARY TO APPROVE ANY CONSTITUTIONAL
CHANGE. PUBLIC DISCONTENT WITH GOG POLICES AND
THE ECONOMY IS HIGH NOW AND ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT
THE DISCONTENT WILL GROW. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE
GUYANESE WOULD FREELY VOTE TO CHANGE THE PRESENT
CONSTITUTION IN ANY FUNDAMENTAL WAY. THUS IF A NEW
CONSTITUTION IS TO BE PUT INTO EFFECT IT PROBABLY
WOULD HAVE TO BE IMPOSED. WE HAVE DOUBTS THAT THE
GUYANESE PUBLIC WOULD ACCEPT AN IMPOSED CONSTITUTION.
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